

REMARKS

No amendments, cancellations, or additions have been made to the claims of the presently claimed case. As such, claims 1-30 are currently pending in the case. Further examination and reconsideration of the presently claimed application are respectfully requested.

Allowed Claims

Claims 9-13, 17-22 and 28-30 were allowed. Applicant appreciates the Examiner's allowance of claims 9-13, 17-22 and 28-30 and eagerly awaits formal allowance of the remaining claims.

Objections to the Claims

Claims 2, 7, 8, and 15 were objected to as being dependent upon rejected base claims. Applicant sincerely appreciates the Examiner's recognition of the patentable subject matter recited in these claims. However, as will be set forth below, the art cited against claims 1 and 14, from which claims 2, 7, 8, and 15 depend, is not available as prior art. Consequently, claims 1 and 14, as well as claims dependent therefrom, are asserted to be patentably distinct from the cited art. Accordingly, removal of this objection is respectfully requested.

Section 102 Rejections

Claims 1, 3-6, 14, 16, and 23-27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,430,624 to Jamtgaard et al. (hereinafter referred to as "Jamtgaard"). As will be set forth in more detail below, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

Jamtgaard is not available as prior art against the current application. As noted in a response to a previous Office Action mailed September 11, 2002, a declaration under 37 C.F.R. § 131 was filed to expedite prosecution of the captioned case. A copy of the declaration is attached hereto. The declaration establishes an invention date prior to October 21, 1999 for the subject matter of the current claims. Because Jamtgaard was filed on October 21, 1999, Jamtgaard is not available as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) against the present claims. Accordingly, removal of the § 102(e) rejection of the currently pending claims 1, 3-6, 14, 16, and 23-27 is respectfully requested.

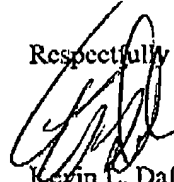
2/13

CONCLUSION

This response constitutes a complete response to all issues raised in the Office Action mailed March 11, 2004. In view of the remarks traversing the rejections, Applicants assert that pending claims 1-30 are in condition for allowance. If the Examiner has any questions, comments, or suggestions, the undersigned attorney earnestly requests a telephone conference.

No fees are required for filing this amendment; however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment, to Conley Rose, P.C. Deposit Account No. 03-2769/5468-03200.

Respectfully submitted,



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3/13